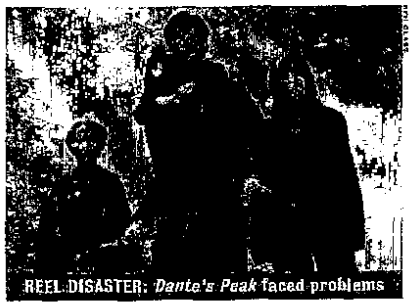
Peak a Boo Boo

DANTE'S PEAK, which set a February box office record during its opening weekend, has all the makings of a classic disaster movie. But if you're the type to put stock in omens or karma, it also has all the makings of a classic *disaster*.

Take the film's calamitous Feb. 5 premiere in L.A. First, the weather turned unseasonably cold, which kept most of Hollywood's brighter stars at bay, although **Jennifer Aniston** and **James Woods** braved the chill. Then the projector malfunctioned, which delayed the screening for 80 minutes and forced director **Roger Donaldson** to get on the loudspeaker and announce, "The worst nightmare a director could have has occurred. I hope that this will get all the bad luck out of the way." Then halfway through the movie, the film stopped again when reels had to be manually changed.



REEL DISASTER: *Dante's Peak* faced problems

Simple misfortune? Maybe. But consider this: Most of *Peak*'s principal photography was done in Wallace, Idaho, a town that could charitably be described as disaster-prone. Over the years, Wallace has survived several floods, two major fires (including one in 1910 that burned down a quarter of the town and 3 million surrounding acres), a mining accident in 1972 that killed 91 people, and even that granddaddy of all catastrophes: **Michael Cimino**'s *Heaven's Gate*, parts of which were filmed there in 1979.

"We just happen to live in a place where geographical and geological conditions make these things more likely," says John Amonson, executive director of the Wallace District Mining Museum. "It's like having a house on Tornado Alley in Kansas."

Of course, from Universal's point of view, the biggest cataclysm may have come from outer space. In the last two weeks, Fox's rerelease of *Star Wars* has obliterated all competition. "Would I have preferred for [*Wars*] not to have been there? Of course," says Universal president of distribution Nikki Rocco. "*Dante's* would have owned the marketplace." As it was, *Peak* opened to a strong $18.5 million but still a disappointing second to *Wars*' $24 million. And given *Peak*'s monumental $115 million budget, that may truly be a disaster. —*David Poland and Julie Fanselow*

TO SPY FOR: Original *Avengers* Rigg and Macnee

VERY A-PEELING

HOLLYWOOD'S APPETITE for nostalgia continues. The latest recycling project: *The Avengers*, that quirky '60s spy series, which is now headed for the big screen courtesy of Warner Bros. Already signed to the estimated $50 million film is **Ralph Fiennes**, who will play John Steed, the character made famous by **Patrick Macnee**. And stepping into **Diana Rigg**'s formidable boots as Mrs. Emma Peel will most likely be **Uma Thurman**. ("She's in serious discussions about it," says a spokesman for the actress.)

Thurman is the latest in a long line of contenders for the Peel part (**Gwyneth Paltrow, Madeleine Stowe,** and **Drew Barrymore** were under consideration). Until recently, **Nicole Kidman** was the front-runner. However, a scheduling conflict with **Stanley Kubrick**'s *Eyes Wide Shut*, which she's currently filming with hubby **Tom Cruise**, made Kidman pass. (*The Avengers* isn't due to start filming until early June, and *Eyes* might not even wrap before then.)

THURMAN

The big question is, are people really clamoring for a remake of a 30-year-old British television series? Although the show is fondly remembered by a core of fans, *The Avengers* doesn't have the pop-cultural cachet of *Mission: Impossible* or *The Brady Bunch*. "The brand is solid, but people who remember it are older," says Warner theatrical marketing president Chris Pula. "So it's unrealistic to think you can rely on that. It has to reinvent itself for younger audiences."

So expect a fast-paced action-adventure story, laced with flashy effects. Early drafts of the script had Peel and superspy Steed joining forces to fight villains who hurl lethal thunderbolts. However, the film will also be faithful to the offbeat feel of the original. "Certainly this is going to be updated for the '90s," says producer Jerry Weintraub. "But I was a big fan of the show and the tone of it is one thing I want to keep." Bowlers and bumbershoots, anyone? —*Judy Brennan*

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/ggnm0004